

Foreword



National
Oceanic and
Atmospheric
Administration



U.S.
DEPARTMENT
OF
COMMERCE

NOAA Fisheries Service Northeast Cooperative Research Partners Program

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service), Northeast Cooperative Research Partners Program (NCRPP) was initiated in 1999. The goals of this program are to enhance the data upon which fishery management decisions are made as well as to improve communication and collaboration among commercial fishery participants, scientists and fishery managers. NOAA Fisheries Service works in close collaboration with the New England Fishery Management Council's Research Steering Committee to set research priorities to meet management information needs.

Fishery management is, by nature, a multiple year endeavor which requires a time series of fishery dependent and independent information. Additionally, there are needs for immediate short-term biological, oceanographic, social, economic and habitat information to help resolve fishery management issues. Thus, the program established two avenues to pursue cooperative research through longer and short-term projects. First, short-term research projects are funded annually through competitive contracts. Second, three longer-term collaborative research projects were developed. These projects include: 1) a pilot study fleet (fishery dependent data); 2) a pilot industry based survey (fishery independent data); and 3) groundfish tagging (stock structure, movements and mixing, and biological data).

First, a number of short-term research projects have been developed to work primarily on commercial fishing gear modifications, improve selectivity of catch on directed species, reduce bycatch, and study habitat reactions to mobile and fixed fishing gear.

Second, two cooperative research fleets have been established to collect detailed fishery dependent and independent information from commercial fishing vessels. The original concept, developed by the Canadians, referred to these as "sentinel fleets". In the New England groundfish setting it is more appropriate to consider two industry research fleets. A pilot industry-based survey fleet (fishery independent) and a pilot commercial study fleet (fishery dependent) have been developed.

Additionally, extensive tagging programs are being conducted on a number of groundfish species to collect information on migrations and movements of fish, identify localized or subregional stocks, and collect biological and demographic information on these species.

For further information on the Cooperative Research Partners Programs please contact:

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Northeast Cooperative Research Partners Program

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www.nero.noaa.gov/StateFedOff/coopresearch/

Final Report
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Trawl Survey

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes the second year of a comprehensive bottom trawl survey of groundfish and other species for Maine-New Hampshire's inshore waters. This survey continues to develop the standards to be utilized for long term monitoring of the inshore waters of the Gulf of Maine. Funds set aside by Congress to assist groundfishermen were administered and distributed through the Cooperative Research Partners Initiative of the National Marine Fisheries Service with the goal of fostering research partnerships between commercial fishermen and scientists.

This survey is intended to compliment similar surveys conducted by the National Marine Fisheries Service in the outer waters of the Gulf of Maine and surveys conducted by other Atlantic coast states in their inshore waters. Prior to this survey, no fishery independent information has been available for approximately 80% of the U.S. Gulf of Maine's inshore waters. This survey utilizes newly designed research nets and two commercial fishing vessels to complete 100 trawls twice yearly for a total of 50 days at sea.

This report highlights findings of the second year and discusses comparisons with the pilot year. In-depth analysis of only two years of data is premature. In fact, it will be several years before a time series will be developed to use in stock assessment models. Additional information will be provided on several supplemental cruises as well.

Trawl survey data has a wide array of uses beyond groundfish stock assessments. In truth, this is a multispecies survey that provides broad information on finfish and invertebrate populations and communities that can contribute to how we manage our marine environments.